

EVENTS CALENDAR

Critical Research in International Politics Lecture Series

ELIZABETH HURD



Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion

Thursday, March 10, 2016, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Mershon Center for International Security Studies

1501 Neil Avenue | Room 120 Columbus, Ohio 43201

[Register here for this event](#)

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd is associate professor of political science at Northwestern University, with a courtesy appointment in religious studies. She teaches and writes on religion, politics and international public life. Her work pursues an integrative approach to the study of politics and religion focusing on dilemmas of national and international governance involving difference, equality, power, law, and pluralism. Her books include *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (2008) and *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion* (2015), both published by Princeton.

She is co-editor of *Politics of Religious Freedom* (Chicago, 2015), *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (Palgrave, 2010), and a co-organizer of the Luce-supported Politics of Religious Freedom: Contested Norms and Local Practices research project. At Northwestern, she directs the Buffett Faculty Research Group on Global Politics and Religion, co-directs a graduate certificate program in Religion and Global Politics, is a core faculty member in the Middle East and North Africa program, and teaches courses on America and the world, religion and international relations, the Middle East in global politics, and religion and law in cross-cultural perspective.

Hurd is a regular contributor to public discussions on U.S. foreign policy and the politics of religious diversity, and has written for *Boston Review*, *Public Culture*, *The Atlantic*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Foreign Policy*, *Al Jazeera America*, *Globe and Mail*, and *The Monkey Cage*. In 2015-16, Hurd is a faculty fellow at the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities at Northwestern, and is serving on the Global Strategy Task Force, charged with defining a global engagement strategy for Northwestern in the coming decade.

Abstract

In this talk, Hurd introduces the central argument of her book, *Beyond Religious Freedom*. The book is a study of state-sponsored global efforts to promote religious freedom, religious engagement and the rights of religious minorities. It asks: What difference do these projects make for the well-being of the people whose lives they seek to shape, reform and redeem?

Hurd develops a new vocabulary that distinguishes between "expert religion," "governed religion" and "lived religion." Exploring the blurred boundaries and dizzying power dynamics between these fields, she draws attention to the distance between constructs of religious governance — such as religious freedom, religious outreach and interfaith dialogue — authorized by experts, states and other authorities, and the lived realities of the individuals and communities they aspire to govern.

Beyond Religious Freedom challenges the assumption that the legalization of freedom of religion, engagement with faith communities, and protections for religious minorities are the keys to emancipating society from persecution and discrimination. Instead, these efforts generate social tensions by transforming religious difference into a matter of law. This leads to a politics defined by religious difference, favors forms of religion authorized by those in power, and excludes other ways of being and belonging.



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